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Business Aviation Optics: *Now You See It, Now You Don't*

Business aircraft should never be considered part of a shell game, observes Jay Mesinger.

Just a handful of years ago, following the Big Three Auto Makers' testimony before Congress, the optics related to owning and operating business aircraft seemed like a shell game. Can, or should a company hide its use of Business Aviation?

Then things got worse: companies divested from their aircraft altogether, since selling seemed like the surest way to avoid the optics spotlight.

Unfortunately (but perhaps predictably) many other financial and critical business problems were created as a result of kneejerk reactions to the optics of the aircraft. Boards and senior management were having serious discussions about how to be less visible to the press and stock holders. In particular, discussions about using business aircraft as effective tools to accomplish growth and create competitive advantage were all but gone.

Reaction to the optics issue exacerbated the economic problems that we all experienced starting in 2009. But now, in the fall of 2013, I have some good news. The optic controversy is subsiding.

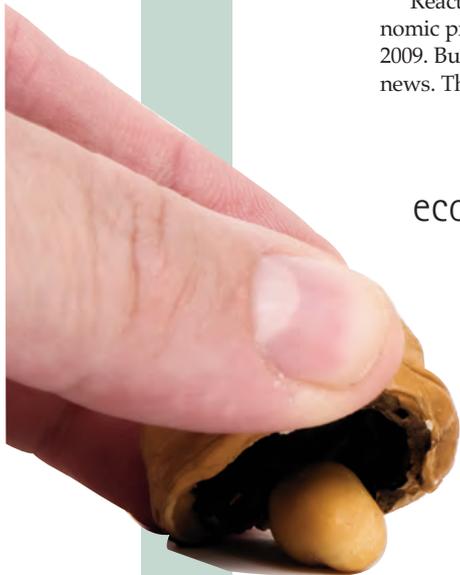
I am not saying that companies are shining spotlights on their aircraft or advertising the acquisition of a new business jet. They never did that even before that ill-fated Congressional hearing in 2008. The idea of remaining low profile for security reasons still exists and, in fact, in this very dangerous world security concerns are even greater than ever.

Security aside, however, the benefits of both buying and using the business aircraft to increase shareholder value and grow the company by getting out ahead of your competition and in front of your client are enormous. And such benefits are being recognized by Boards and opinion leaders. That willingness to emphasize the company aircraft as a valuable business tool will no doubt be the beginning of a more stable and vibrant recovery.

TAKE A FRESH LOOK

If you are still grappling with optics, please take a minute to visit several very important websites. The first, of course, is the National Business Aviation Association's site, www.nbaa.org. This is the association >

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What the Boardroom needs to know about Business Aviation

credited with the daily furtherance of our wonderful industry. If you are considering operating a business aircraft or currently do and are not a member, I encourage you to join immediately. The association, its President Ed Bolen, the staff and the Board of Directors are passionate and devoted to Business Aviation.

The other website that was developed specifically to alter the course of the optics battle is The Alliance For Aviation Across America. Its site can be found at <http://act.aviationacrossamerica.com>.

This wonderful resource illustrates state-by-state the importance of Business Aviation. You can see the number of aviation related jobs by state as well as the grass roots efforts in each state to promote the advantages of transport via business aircraft. Consulting the website, you begin to understand the legislative initiatives in each state with respect to the positive attributes of Business Aviation and the people it touches.

Both websites allow you to communicate directly with your elected officials to let them know how Business Aviation is positively affecting you and your company. You also see legislative items that negatively affect the use and costs of Business Aviation for your operation.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Business aircraft transactions are increasing, in large part due to a less oppressive attitude towards Business Aviation. Our community is getting back to business. What we hope will be sustainable is the positive attitude toward and ultimate use of business aircraft. As I pen this article I am feeling optimistic about the continuance of this transaction activity.

I do caution, however, that this renewed activity still leaves the supply of available aircraft higher than normal, which will keep pricing pressure formidable. We still have many domestic as well as International economic challenges to weather. Our industry as well as the entire global economy still remains fragile. We must view the recovery one day at a time.

We must collectively shout to the world that our Business Aviation economy is a cornerstone of the entire global economic recovery—not just our industry's recovery. Factories are created in rural America because Business Aviation provides access to economic opportunity. Business aircraft bring the ebb and flow of commerce to all parts of our nation and the world.

Embrace Business Aviation. Be proud to operate business aircraft and be involved with this community. Remember that use of a business aircraft is the sign of a well-managed company.

[Editor's Note: To learn more about Business Aviation, attend the NBAA 2013 Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition taking place in Las Vegas, October 22 through 24.]

Do you have any questions or opinions on the above topic? Get them answered/published in World Aircraft Sales Magazine. Email feedback to: Jack@avbuyer.com

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